

WHO predicts AIDS pandemic in Asia

By Nazmul Ashraf, back from Berlin

Lack of effective prevention of the alarming growth of HIV infections will result in the world's worst AIDS pandemic in Asia, warns the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO has described the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this region, especially South and Southeast Asia, as "explosive", saying the HIV infection which causes AIDS, is increasing here exactly the way it did in Africa — the hardest-hit in the world — 10 years ago.

According to the WHO information, made available during the recently-held Ninth International Conference on AIDS in Berlin, Germany, there were hardly any HIV infections in Asia six years ago and today there are major epidemics in countries like Thailand, India and Myanmar.

The WHO estimates that over 1.5 million HIV infections have occurred in adults in Asia (mostly in Thailand and India). It predicts that by the end of this century, over one million adults will become infected in Asia and the Pacific each year. If the countries of the region do not take decisive action, they could surpass Africa in new HIV infections as early as the mid-1990s.

The WHO says that effective HIV prevention in developing countries could reduce the number of new adult HIV infections during the rest of the decade by 9.6 million — over four million fewer in Asia, more than four million less in Africa and a reduction of about one million in Latin America.

Director of the WHO's Global Programme on AIDS (GPA), Dr Michael Merson told the conference that such a reduction in new infections could be achieved if all developing countries implemented a basic prevention package which should include the promotion and distribution of condoms, the treatment of conventional STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) because of their role in facilitating HIV transmission, AIDS education in schools and through the mass media, promotion of condom use by the prostitutes and their clients, and maintenance of safe blood supply and needle exchange programmes for injecting drug users. But the best mix of interventions must be chosen adapted for local context, and adjusted to local constraints, such as societal forces operating locally, he pointed out.

The WHO has calculated that comprehensive prevention in the developing world would cost between 1.5 and 2.9 billion dollar a year. The WHO calculates that investing this amount from now to the year 2000 would save close to 90 billion dollar in direct and indirect costs from AIDS by the turn of the century. The main impact of prevention will be seen later well into the 21st century — both in financial terms and in the incalculable yield of diminished human sufferings, the WHO believes.

Dr Merson, who is scheduled to visit Dhaka from July 6 next, informed the conference that the WHO would take up an annual investment of 2.5 billion dollar to combat the pandemic in the developing nations.

During his stay in Dhaka, Dr Merson will have dialogue with the government leaders on the prevention of HIV infection. The GPA Director is expected to call upon the top politicians, economic officials and industrialists to invest now in AIDS prevention. He is also likely to urge the industrialists to join government and international agencies in a team effort against the disease.

A GPA estimate says that since the start of the pandemic a decade ago, at least six million young people, about half of the estimated total 13 million HIV infections worldwide, have been infected through unprotected intercourse or needle-sharing. And there is enormous potential for further spread among youth, particularly since 800 million live in developing countries, where the pandemic is expanding the fastest.

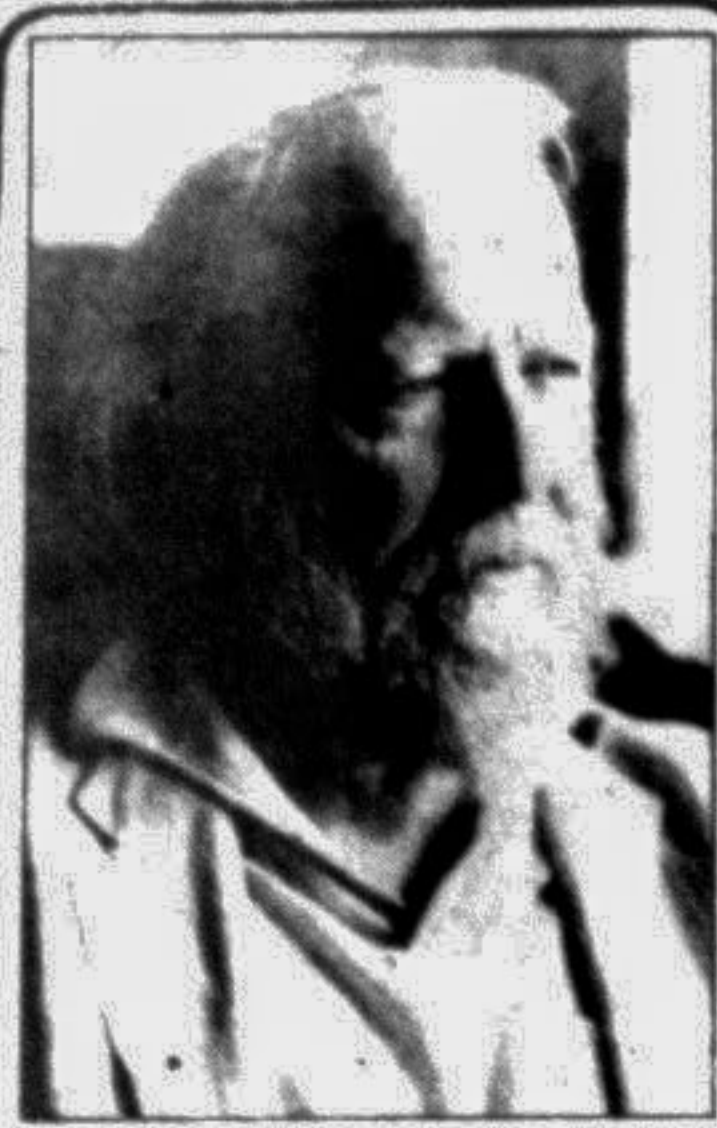
There has been a worldwide drop in median age at first intercourse, says the WHO. In many parts of the world, half of all young people have had intercourse by the age of 15 or 16 and millions of youngsters are already sexually active at 12 or 13.

Young girls are especially vulnerable to STDs, including HIV infection. They tend to marry or have intercourse with older men who have had more sexual exposure. As the receptive partner, females run greater risk to begin with and this risk is magnified in teenage girls because their immature cervix and limited vaginal secretions put up less of a barrier. To make things worse, sometimes young girls are physically forced at first intercourse, resulting in genital trauma.

The WHO projection shows that presently there are one million infected adults in South Asia, mostly in India. Studies of HIV prevalence in female sex workers point to a sharply rising trend in at least two cities of India.

A study among STD patients in Pune, West India, found an HIV prevalence of almost 9 per cent in 1991 and 17 per cent in 1992. As of March 1992, HIV prevalence among blood donors ranged from 0-1 per cent to 1.8 per cent in four cities of northern, northeastern, southern and western India.

There has been a steep rise in infection among drug injectors in Myanmar, Thailand and north-east India. In just 3-4 years, prevalence has risen from zero to 50 per cent. These infections, acquired through needle-sharing, are in turn fuelling heterosexual transmission among adults who do not use drugs. Infection through unprotected intercourse in the dominant route of transmission throughout the region, reports the WHO.



William Golding passes away

LONDON, June 20: Nobel prize-winning author Sir William Golding, who wrote "Lord of the Flies," died at the age of 81, police said Saturday.

It is thought he died from a heart attack at his home in Falmouth, Cornwall, southwest England.

Golding won the Nobel prize for literature in 1983 and five years later he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

He was most famous for his novel "Lord of the Flies" published in 1954, now considered one of the classics of English literature. The story was about a group of children marooned on an island who descend towards cruelty and chaos — twice turned into a film.

Apart from "Lord of the Flies," his best-known novels are "Pincher Martin", describing the last moments of a drowning sailor, and "Rites of Passage" which in 1980 won Britain's premier literary award, the Booker Prize.

"Rites of Passage" describes a voyage to Australia in the 19th century, showing how a pompous cleric becomes involved in a sexual scandal and dies of shame.

In 1987 Golding completed a sequel to "Rites of Passage" called "Close Quarters". A third novel "Fire down Below" finished the series in 1989.

Golding was born in Cornwall on September 19, 1911.

He was educated at the Marlborough Grammar School, where his father taught, and at the Oxford University. He then moved to London and took up teaching, while acting in and directing amateur plays.

He served in the navy during World War Two commanding a rocket-firing ship and taking part in the 1944 Normandy landings. At the end of the war he took up teaching again.

He died Saturday at his home in Falmouth after having taken part in a reception in his honour on Friday evening.

Matthew Evans, president of publishers Faber and Faber, said: "He was found dead in the morning, probably from a heart attack."

Sircar

From Page 1 Col 5

Speaker Shakh Razzak Ali announced that the word should be expunged from the proceedings. The opposition members were calmed after repeated appeals from the chair.

A similar situation was created last week when Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury dubbed former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad a "thief."

Munir

From Page 1 Col 7

Judge had also passed the death sentence on Munir's middle-aged paramour Hosne Ara Khuku for abetting the murder. However, on appeal Khuku won acquittal from the Supreme Court.

Munir, 34, is the younger of the two sons and one daughter of gynaecologist Mehrunnisa and her physician husband M A Kascim.

Munir, who had lived a debonair life-style, had married Rima only a few months before the crime was committed. He was accused of infidelity and unfaithfulness towards his wife during the trial proceedings. Among the many of his female companions, Hosne Ara Khuku was reported to be his constant lover.

Munir owned a garments factory and was reported to be quite wealthy.

The accused was defended by senior advocate Abdul Malek and Barrister Rafiqul Huq.

The State was represented by Attorney General Aminul Huq, Deputy Attorney General Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Assistant Attorney General Sharifuddin Chaklader.

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Poet Begum Sufia Kamal being presented a bouquet by drama artiste Lucky Enam and a child at a reception accorded the poet on her 83rd birthday at the National Museum Children's Auditorium in city.

Sufia Kamal feted on her 83rd birthday

By Staff Correspondent

Poet Sufia Kamal who turned 83 yesterday says she is ashamed to have lived for such a long time.

"I feel I am blocking someone's way from getting into the limelight," she said while speaking at a birthday reception accorded to her at the National Museum Children's Auditorium Sunday afternoon.

Hundreds of children and members of various women's organisation paid respects to the ageing poet with garlands and bouquets at the function arranged by the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP).

Presided over by the president of BMP Salina Khaled, the programme was also attended by poet Shamsur Rahman, Nurunnahar Fatunnessa, Jahannara Imam, Nurjahan Murshid, Zinat Ara Bhuiyan, Hamida Rahman and others.

The women, children, artists, social workers and newsmen packed in the auditorium gave the poet a standing ovation when she entered the hall at 4:45 pm.

Begum Sufia Kamal was born in the Shaestabad Zamindar Bari at Baisal on this day in 1910.

Meanwhile BSS adds: Recalling the contributions of poet Sufia Kamal over the years, speakers at the reception termed her as a living conscience of the nation. At this advanced age she is still playing a pioneering role for the progress and welfare of the society which is a unique example for all, they said.

In response to the tributes, Begum Sufia Kamal urged all to work for humanity discarding all narrowness, bigotry, ignorance and disparity.

"Throughout my long life I was blessed with the love and good wishes of numerous people. Their feelings for me will be a meaningful if they distribute their selfless love for the distressed humanity and

engage themselves for the progress of the society," she said.

Referring to women's development in the country she paid her tribute to Begum Rokya Sakhawat who had played the pioneering role for the improvement of the lot of the Bengali women. Poet Sufia Kamal also recalled the contributions of Sawgat editor Muhammad Nasiruddin for his all out cooperation in uplifting the women of the nation.

She urged the country's women organisations to put in their efforts for building up a competent and worthy future generation along with their efforts for women's development.

Speaking on the occasion, poet Shamsur Rahman said Sufia Kamal appeared in the national life as a poet who got the blessings of Rabiudranath Tagore and Kazir Nazrul Islam, but she has obtained a permanent place in the minds of people irrespective of gender and religion for her love for the human being. She has endeared the nation with her motherly affection, he said.

Begum Jahannara Imam and the editor of weekly 'Begum' Nurjahan Begum were among those who offered garlands to Sufia Kamal yesterday. Dr Selim Jahangir, author of the biography 'Sufia Kamal' published to mark the birthday of the poet, presented her a copy of the book.

The organisations which paid homage to the octogenarian poet included different units of the Mahila Parishad, the Bangladesh Mahila Samity, the Bangladesh Mahila Sangsad, the Kanchi Kanchar Mela, Khelaghor Ashor, Lekhika Sangha, Federation of University Women, Oikkyabaddha Nari Samaj, Nari Pakkha, National Blind Welfare Association, Narimukti Sangsad, Ubtinig, and Prajanma '71.

The Midnight File

India warns Pakistan of personal attacks

NEW DELHI, June 20: India warned the Pakistani high commission (embassy) today against making personal attacks on Indian leaders, and reiterated that Islamabad was involved in the Bombay blasts which killed some 300 people. The Indian External Affairs Ministry said a press release issued by the mission on Friday was tendentious and that "repetition of such language and personal attacks upon Indian leaders will be regarded as serious by India," reports AFP.

US marine ships arrive off Mogadishu

MOGADISHU, June 20: Four ships carrying several thousand US Marines arrived off the Somali capital today, as the United Nations postponed plans to resume food distribution in southern Mogadishu, saying the area was still too dangerous. Harrier Jump jets from the US amphibious force screamed over the devastated city where fugitive warlord Mohamed Farah Aidede is believed to have gone to ground after his headquarters were captured in an air and ground assault by UN forces Thursday, reports AFP.

EC policy to end Bosnia war fails

COPENHAGEN, June 20: European Community foreign ministers faced the grim reality that their policy for ending the war in Bosnia has failed as they gathered today to discuss the crisis on the eve of an EC summit. EC mediator Lord Owen, who will seek fresh guidance at the meeting following last week's collapse of the peace plan he championed, said efforts, now had to focus on creating a viable mini-state for the Muslims within Bosnia, reports Reuters.

ROK firm starts operation in DEPZ

By Staff Correspondent

Youngone Hi-Tech Sportswear Industries Limited started its operation in the country's second export processing zone at Savar yesterday.

Youngone is among the 16 industrial units which obtained permission to operate in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ), inaugurated yesterday by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The South Korean company, with an investment of 3 million US dollars and an export target of 8 lakh pieces of sportswear products, also has two projects in operation in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ). Another three new plants of the group are proposed — two in CEPZ and one in the DEPZ.

The total investment of the company, after implementation of all the projects, will stand at 27.9 million US dollars in Bangladesh.

The Youngone Hi-Tech Sportswear Limited will produce sportswear, ski-wear, down jacket, rainwear, leisureware and driving gear and these will be exported to all the EC countries, USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Austria and Switzerland.

The other project of the Youngone, under implementation in the DEPZ, will produce padding and non-woven synthetic products.

Youngone plans to employ 750 people in its sportswear project, of which 250 have already been recruited, and another 200 workers in its synthetic project.

16 industries

From Page 1 Col 5

uments, surgical and dental instruments and equipment, hospital equipment, engineering products, scientific measuring instruments, aircraft instruments, laboratory ware, printing and publishing, printing and copying equipment and accessories, do-it-yourself tools and kits, plastic moulded products, industries based on new uses of jute, footwear, leather products, cutting and polishing precious and semi-precious stones, musical instruments, jewellery and toys.

The DEPZ, having an area of 141 acres has, in the meantime, developed 80 acres of land for industries. It will have 100 industrial plots with requisite structural and infrastructural facilities.

Till now, 60 plots have been developed and made ready for immediate construction of factory buildings with all utility services including gas, electricity, telecommunications and water connections.

Besides, the DEPZ will have 16 blocks of standard factory buildings with a total floor space of 72 thousand square metres. Eight standard factory buildings having 36 thousand square metres of floor space have been completed so far.

The DEPZ is equipped with all structural facilities including a zone service complex, customs fence, and police outpost.

Mostafiz presides HR confce session

GENEVA, June 20: Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman presided over the 11th session of the plenary session of the World Conference on Human Rights on Friday last, reports BSS.

This session was dedicated to the commemoration of the international year of the World Indigenous People. During the session the Nobel Peace Prize winner Ms Rigoberta Menchutu addressed the plenary session with other dignitaries.

On Thursday, the Foreign Minister had a special meeting with the representative of Bangladesh NGO participating at the World Conference on Human Rights.

Flood situation

From Page 1 Col 7

The sources said reports of outbreak of diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases were pouring in from different thanas. Two persons were killed and many others were also attacked.

The inter-district road links also remained snapped as most parts of roads were submerged by flood water. The situation in Bianbazaran thana has also aggravated and the road link of the thana with district headquarters remained suspended.

Sunamganj district administration sources told BSS that almost all the ten thanas of the district were affected by fresh flood waters yesterday as the Surma was flowing much above the danger level.

The flood situation in Habiganj also further deteriorated with the rise of water level in the Khowai and flood waters entered many parts of the district through breaches in different embankments caused by the flash flood only a week ago.

The flood situation in Maulvibazar district, according to control room sources, also worsened as the river Manu recorded further rise.

The sources said that six thanas of the district had been affected, of which two were worst-hit. These are Balaganj and Kulaura thanas.

Supplementary budget

From Page 1 Col 4

charges and urged the opposition critics to specify the charges for action.

On the demand for more than 130 crore taka to supplement the defence budget, Menon said the members of Parliament must be informed about the defence expenditure. He said that in India and the USA defence expenditure was disclosed to the legislators in a pink book. On the same issue Abul Hasan Chowdhury of the AL also demanded discussion on sector-wise defence expenditure.

In reply to the two opposition MPs, the Finance Minister on behalf of Major General (Retd) M Majidul Huq, who is in charge of defence affairs in Parliament, said that the supplementary allocation was needed to cover the enhanced salaries of the army and to construct houses for them. The minister said that there was no development budget for the defence and all the expenses were met from the revenue budget.

The opposition members also opposed the additional allocation for the Bureau of Anti-Corruption saying the bureau itself was steeped in corruption. Without reforming the bureau most of the allocation would be misused, they felt.

The House resumes at 10 this morning.

Our Chittagong Correspondent adds: The flood situation in most of the affected areas here remained unchanged yesterday due to onrush of rain waters from hilly areas coupled with fresh rainfall in the morning.

The worst affected areas in Chittagong district included Anwara, Banshkhali, Sandwip, Saitkania, Hathazari, Raozan and Fatikchhari, according to an

Ctg outer anchorage smugglers' haven

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, June 20: Lax anti-smuggling patrol at the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port resulted in a fresh influx of smuggled goods here, sources said.

The outer anchorage has again turned into a haven of smugglers, sources added, saying that some liner vessels operating between Chittagong Port and other parts of the world via Singapore and Hong Kong are reportedly ferrying the smuggled goods along with the consignments of cargo to Chittagong Port.

The smuggled contrabands brought by those vessels including electronics, cigarettes, wines, toiletries and crockeries are unloaded at the outer anchorage and sold to the local clients waiting there on board high-powered engine boats, trawlers and sampans, sources informed.

According to sources, the smuggled goods reaching the shore from the outer anchorage have flooded the coastal villages under Anwara and Banskhali thanas of Chittagong and the Kutubdia coastal area under Cox's Bazar district.

The law enforcing agencies of Chittagong, in two separate raids at the coastal villages of Anwara and Banskhali on June 6 and 7, recovered smuggled fax machines, dish-antennae, fishing nets and foreign cigarettes worth over Tk one crore.

But most of the contraband items are supplied to different parts of the country through the city markets here, sources also informed.

About two months ago, carrying of smuggled goods by liner vessels was almost effectively checked when anti-smuggling teams of the Chittagong Sea Customs stepped up raids in the outer anchorage regularly.

At that time anti-smuggling teams of Sea Customs raided a number of liner vessels waiting to unload the outer anchorage and seized a huge quantity of illegal goods.

Among these vessels, the Ukrainian flag carrier MV K Jaspersen was raided on April 10 and contraband worth one crore taka were seized while another vessel M V Adran Gonserva was raided on April 15 from where contraband worth over half a crore taka were seized.

Customs officials said show-cause notices had already been issued against the crew of these two vessels on charges of smuggling goods into Bangladesh territorial waters.

A senior Customs official here said anti-smuggling raids at the outer anchorage had been slowed down due to inclement weather now prevailing in the sea.

AL: Babu

From Page 1 Col 8

appearance. The party caucus also resolved to send relief teams to the flood-affected areas of the Sylhet district. The meeting, however, severely criticised the government for its "indifference" towards the flood-affected people in different parts of the country.

Meanwhile, a short discussion is scheduled in Parliament today on the flood situation in the affected areas.

The ALCCW meeting was presided over by Abdu Samad Azad.

Qualified support

From Page 1 Col 7

its overwhelmingly import-substitution production structure to an export-oriented production structure is correct. However, there is a lot of anxiety that the accompanying process of import liberalisation will hurt the domestic industry beyond the point of recovery.

There are valid reasons for such anxiety. In Bangladesh industry need protection not only to give entrepreneurs time to become efficient and thus be able to reduce cost and become more and more competitive but also for inefficiency of the public sector.

Take the case of power as an example: The effective price of power to Bangladesh entrepreneurs is very high and can, by itself, make an industry which is efficient in all respect uncompetitive. Similarly, transportation where the public sector plays a major role, suffer from serious inefficiency. If these inefficiencies are not removed rapid reduction in protection will cause major dislocation in the industrial sector.

The more immediate worry of the private sector relates to lack of clarity about several policy measures announced in the budget. The two thousand plus items on which Saifur Rahman will reduce tariff rates are yet to be fully publicised. Will the lack of details in the budget announcement be made up by issuance of SROs?

Finally there is a lack of confidence about policy implementation at the industry level. Mahubub Jamil, President of the Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has expressed concern about this in the BTV discussion. Mahubub Jamil said that many progressive policies of the government have been frustrated by bureaucratic red-tapism, and this is likely to continue.

Ishaq Khan

From Page 1 Col 7

deal to Sharif — PDA support for trimming Presidential powers in return for announcement of an immediate election.

Some sources in the PDA said Gilani's step smack of a rebellion against the party leadership.

"I am a representative of the people not of a party," Gilani said in his speech prior to the passage of the resolution.

Sharif needs a two-thirds vote from some 290 deputies of the directly elected Lower House and the 86-member Senate to annul the contentious provision, known as the 8th Constitutional Amendment.

DCCI chief

From Page 1 Col 5

cent.

Wazullah observed that import duty on capital machinery should be fixed at a flat rate of 2.5 per cent and it should be applied to both export-oriented and import-substitute industries.

About agricultural subsidy, the DCCI chief cited the examples of the USA, Japan and the EC countries which still provide subsidy to their farmers.

"The government should re-evaluate its policy to withdraw subsidy on agriculture", he commented.

Instead of cutting agri-subsidy, the government can concentrate on structural reform in administration and cut down the top heavy administration for greater resource mobilisation," Wazullah observed.